
Goal Setting

Guidelines & Resources



GOAL SETTING

After you and your mentee have gotten to know each other, you should meet with your program coordinator to discuss developing short and long-term goals. Goals can be changes in behavior or working toward something as ambitious as becoming class president.

A goal should be:

- **Realistic** - If it is too difficult, it will lead to frustration.
- **Challenging** - If it is too easy, there is little incentive to achieve it.
- **Specific** - You need to know what you want to do.
- **Measurable** - You need to know when you have accomplished it.
- **Timely** - It should have a deadline so you won't put it off.

STEPS FOR GOAL SETTING

Have the mentee identify some positive things she/he would like to accomplish. This might be something like getting a driver's license, finding an after school job, passing an English course, or attending school every day.

1. **Select one or two goals to work on.** Help your mentee select goals that are realistic and achievable. You want your mentee to set his/her sights high but also be assured of some success.
2. **Discuss with your mentee how his/her parents or guardian may feel about these goal plans.** If a parent counts on your mentee for babysitting during the school day, regular school attendance may not be a goal that is supported by the family. If the mentee's efforts are not supported or understood by the family, achieving the goal will be more difficult.
3. **Brainstorm ways to reach the goal.** Brainstorming is a process that involves thinking of as many ideas as you can for reaching a goal, even if some may seem silly or unrealistic. You and your mentee should write down all of your ideas. Later, you can help him or her select the best ones.
4. **Identify small steps for reaching the goal.** Most goals require more than one step to complete. Recognize the mentee's attainment of each small step to reach his or her goal.
5. **Identify obstacles that might prevent completion of the goal.** This will need to become part of the action plan for accomplishing the goal. For example, if a parent objects to the

mentee's getting a driver's license, your mentee will have to think of ways to approach the parent to obtain permission. If no one can teach your mentee to drive and she/he does not have money for lessons, what else can be done to accomplish this step?

6. **Decide on a deadline for accomplishment and re-evaluation of the goal.** This is an important step. If the process drags on too long, your mentee may get discouraged and quit. A deadline gives him/her something to work toward. Opportunity for re-evaluation gives you a chance to check his/her progress. Encouragement from you may be all that is needed to keep your mentee on course.

GUIDELINES FOR GOAL SETTING

One of the most important tasks of the mentor is to assist the student in setting short and long term individual goals. There are several important factors to consider before beginning the task of goal setting with your student.

- Time must be spent with your student in establishing a relationship of trust and confidentiality before goal setting should be attempted.
- Involve your student in the setting of goals.
- A short-term goal, which can be immediately achievable by your student, is a good starting point. For example, a short-term achievable goal may be to complete all math homework assignments for the next week.
- Goals must be specific and measurable. For example, "Joe will complete and turn in all math assignments for the next week."
- To assure that an attempt will be made by your student to meet the goal, a commitment should be carried out between the mentor and the student. For example, a written agreement or handshake may serve as a commitment.
- If your student fails to achieve his goal, the following points should be examined:
 - The goal may have been too difficult for the student to achieve.
 - The goal may have been developed without active involvement and commitment of the student.
 - The student may be fearful of achieving a self-enhancing goal. Often, students believe themselves to be losers and become accustomed to making poor choices, which reinforce their negative self-image. The volunteer may need to speak to the student about his fears of being successful and making self-enhancing decisions.

A long-term goal may need to be articulated before a short-term goal can be explored with a student. A student may not see the need to work toward a short-term goal unless the student sees the relationship of the short-term goal to the long-term goal. For example, graduating from High School may be the motivating factor to help a student work toward short-term goals.